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THE KYODAN'S 50 PER CENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY



*Bits of humor and laughter
Lots of heckling and shouting
Respite of order and dialogue
And reservoirs of frustration and blame.*

--one summary of the Kyodan's
17th General Assembly

Behind the Kowakien Hotel in the peaceful resort city of Hakone is a steep mountain pass that, in the old days, was considered impassable.

As the 17th General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) met at this hotel November 20-23, the formidable mountain symbolized the uphill struggle of the Kyodan since 1969 when first the Christian Pavilion at Expo '70, then the student struggle at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (TUTS), split the church down the middle. The bitter political and theological divisions that developed in the church had delayed the convening of the 17th General Assembly for three years.

But last week the 250 voting and 150 non-voting delegates finally met and for four full days tried to overcome the church's own steep mountain pass. Step by heavy step the delegates panted their way up the slope, only to fall short of breath one step from the top.

The first half of the assembly was an autopsy of what has taken place in the Kyodan over the past few years. Sometimes a sharp scalpel was used, at other times a slow, hurting saw. With its bleeding wounds exposed, the assembly then gathered up its courage on the third day and took up the items on the prepared agenda.

By the end of the assembly, the delegates had (1) voted to table a motion saying that Kyodan participation in Expo '70 was a "mistake"; (2) demanded that TUTS withdraw its legal complaints against two students arrested in the 1969 campus struggles; (3) elected a new moderator and vice-moderator; and (4) failed to elect a new Executive Committee.

The Rev. Isuke Toda of Nagoya Church, who for the past year was chairman of the Assembly Preparation Committee, chaired most of the assembly in his capacity as assistant to the acting moderator, the Rev. Kikaku Shimamura. In his opening remarks, Toda carefully and firmly explained the purpose of the assembly: to discuss all key issues as frankly as possible, not to reach consensus but to reach understanding; and to elect new officers to replace those whose terms have long expired, so that the Kyodan can prepare for the next normal assembly.

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NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Japan Christian Center, Room 24, 551 Totsuka-machi 1-chome, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

***** Toda also explained that this assembly had a "provisional character" since three districts (Tokyo, Osaka and Hyogo) had not met to elect official delegates. Nevertheless, said Toda, the legitimacy of the assembly should not be questioned, since voting delegates had been appointed from the three districts by the Kyodan executive committee and delegates present comprised a quorum.

After the first two days of not exactly friendly interaction, the first agenda item dealt with Expo '70. A bill prepared mostly by delegates of the Nishi-Chugoku District requested an open confession that the action of the 15th General Assembly (1968) to support the Christian Pavilion there was a mistake. Three reasons were given in support of the bill: (1) that the principle of two debates on the measure was violated by the 1968 assembly; (2) that the Kyodan avoided people's criticisms of Expo '70 and mistakenly joined government and capital in a demonstration of their greatness; and (3) that the Kyodan, in order to begin to deal with problems since 1969, must first admit to this mistake.

The delegates appeared to be split 50-50 on how to evaluate the Expo issue. During the debate, however, the strongest and most indignant voices were raised by supporters of the bill. Perhaps intoxicated by their own voices, the supporters then miscalculated and consented to vote on a motion to carry the bill over to the next assembly.

The supporters were shocked when the motion carried 115 to 105 with three abstentions.

The second treacherous pass en route to the mountain peak was the issue of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. Two bills were presented which never reached the floor: one called for a "clarification of the nature" of TUTS and the other called on the TUTS faculty and board to account for the introduction of riot police to "normalize" the campus.

A third bill, prepared mostly by delegates from Tokyo and Yokohama, demanded that TUTS withdraw its complaint against two of its students which led to the students being indicted for trespassing.

Speaking to the problems raised in the debate, President Sato of TUTS explained: (1) that the faculty had intended to hold discussions with the students; (2) that the introduction of riot police had nothing to do with the "true Gospel" as they knew and believed it; (3) that they intend to be a Kyodan seminary despite a statement by the previous TUTS president that the Kyodan had no control over TUTS; and (4) that his predecessor had filed complaints against the two students without consulting the faculty.

The assembly's second big surprise came when the third TUTS bill was approved by an overwhelming 162 to 28 margin, with 23 abstentions.

As time began pressing hard, Chairman Toda pleaded to proceed with the election of officers. Everybody agreed, but nearly two hours were spent just on election procedures. The Issue-Raisers, a committed left-of-center group, finally succeeded in persuading the assembly to have candidates for moderator address the assembly before the vote. The assembly set another precedent by allowing a preliminary vote to nominate three candidates for moderator and by allowing three other nominations from the floor.

Nominated in the preliminary vote were Toda, Ichiro Ono of Kyoto's Heian Church and Hajime Sakurai of Takasaki Church. The three nominees from the floor all proposed by the Issue-Raisers, were Seinosuke Oshio of Itabashi Ooyama Church
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in Tokyo, Shigeo Kuwabara of Settsutonda Church in Osaka and Goro Tokunaga of Josai Church in Tokyo.

Toda and Ono made brief statements, but Sakurai yielded to the uproar of indignant voices from the Issue-Raisers and declined the nomination.

Toda was elected on the first ballot, receiving 115 of the 205 votes cast. Feeling the heavy burden he has to bear, Toda burst into tears during his acceptance speech.

The election for vice-moderator went rather smoothly, with Ono receiving 99 of the 194 votes. (The new moderator and vice-moderator will appoint the clerk of the Kyodan.)

During the vote-counting, other issues were raised. The most heated one involved the 1974 Kyodan budget item to give some \$13,000 to TUTS. A motion was presented to suspend this item "until TUTS acts appropriately," but the motion was defeated 31 to 80.

The peak was in sight when the assembly moved to elect members of the Executive Committee (14 clergy and 12 lay persons). The assembly got as far as nominating 21 clergy and 20 lay persons. Then the Issue-Raisers demanded that each delegate vote for only one person instead of a whole slate of 37, out of fear that certain "undesirable persons" would be elected under the slate approach.

When the Steering Committee turned down this request, the final uproar, heckling and confusion set in. Time out was called, during which the hotel management announced that use of the hall had already been extended three hours and couldn't be extended any more. Toda declared a recess, prayers were given in quietness, and the assembly was adjourned.

A Kyodan-related missionary who attended the assembly offered the following observation:

"Samuel Johnson is reported to have said upon seeing a dancing dog: 'It wasn't skillfully or beautifully done, but by God, Sir, the astonishing thing was that it was done at all.' My reaction to the assembly is somewhat similar."

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'BY GOD'S GRACE MY LIFE HAS BEEN SPARED'
--An Interview with Kim Dae Jung--

If top-level officials in the Japanese and South Korean governments have their way, the world will never know the facts about the August 8 kidnapping of South Korean opposition leader Kim Dae Jung from a Tokyo hotel. Japanese police have unequivocally labelled the South Korean CIA as the perpetrator of the abduction, and there are strong indications that powerful, right-wing Japanese interests lent their support. But, in the interest of protecting the growing but strained economic ties between the two countries, the two governments agreed on November 2 to close the investigation and get on with economic aid talks suspended by the kidnapping furor but now scheduled for mid-December.

Meanwhile, Kim Dae Jung remains in Seoul without political voice, even though he was released from 71 days of house arrest on October 26 as a prelude and perhaps precondition, to the Japan-ROK kidnapping cover-up agreement. His political freedom now depends on receiving a passport to go the U.S., where he would become a visiting fellow at Harvard University under an invitation delivered to him personally in Seoul on November 17 by Edwin O. Reischauer, Harvard professor and former Ambassador to Japan.

In an interview shortly before Reischauer's visit, Kim said he was "disappointed" with the Japan-ROK cover-up but that he was "optimistic and hopeful" that international pressure would get him his passport to freedom.

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* * * * * (Kim, who received 46 per cent of the South Korean presidential vote in 1971, went into exile 13 months ago when President Pak declared martial law and assumed dictatorial power. His highly publicized attacks on the Pak regime in the U.S. and Japan prompted a number of moves to have him silenced. In August he was bound, gagged, beaten, blindfolded and spirited to Seoul by a group of Korean-speaking men.)

During the interview, Kim made a number of appeals to Christians around the world to join him in praying that God's will be done in restoring some semblance of freedom and justice to South Korea. The 48-year-old Catholic said that Jesus had answered his prayers and stood by his side on the boat that took him to Korea on August 9.

"I always had the conception in my mind that Christ walks with us, especially in times of trouble," said Kim. "But I didn't really know this reality, nor the power of prayer, until that moment when weights were put on my legs, and I knew I was about to be dumped to the bottom of the sea. I prayed fervently, and I felt Jesus at my shoulder, giving me new life."

In Kim's August 14 national press conference, he began with the words, "By God's grace my life has been spared." With these words, many Koreans discovered for the first time that Kim, who is not an avid churchgoer, was a Christian.

During the 71 days of house arrest he said he "prayed 10 to 15 times a day, giving thanks for my life and asking that justice be served in my fatherland."

He mentioned a recent discussion with ROK Catholic Cardinal Kim about the role of the church: "It occurred to me during the discussion that a Christian has a heavy, definite responsibility but, like Jesus himself, he is nothing without the Cross. The church has the responsibility to suffer with and through the people toward salvation and new life. Even though the church isn't active in politics, it must take the lead, from and with the people, in fighting for social justice," said Kim.

Kim's spirits were high throughout the interview, and he appeared well-rested as the barrage of 1000 visitors since October 26 began to slow down. Although some observers thought that his first statements after house arrest showed he had been duped or brainwashed during the series of 13 interrogations by the South Korean CIA, he didn't hesitate to criticize the Pak Chung Hee regime during the interview.

"For one year now, President Pak has tried to impose his Confucian idea of 'Korean-style democracy' on our people," said Kim, "but he has failed miserably. He could impose it at the top, but he couldn't force it down to where the people are. Rather, we see in the mounting demonstrations the democratic impulses rising up from the people. It's deeply embedded in our history--that's why we have memorials to democratic struggles all over Korea, while Japan has none."

Kim bitterly attacked the government's development model, which he said was built "solely on industrialization for export, with growing dependence on Japan, growing pollution, and growing disparities of income." He said that the government policy of "overlooking the rural sector" is "creating a tall building on a weak foundation of sand."

"Economic progress means nothing if it's economic progress for only a few," he said, "take the Castro revolution: the economic growth rate was very high, but the distribution of it was so terrible, and the government so oppressive and corrupt, that the people became alienated and revolted."

Kim correctly anticipated that the Korea debate in the United Nations General Assembly this month would end without any major decision on matters such as the presence of 40,000 U.S. troops in the South. "There won't be, and there shouldn't be, any decision until North and South reach some mutual agreement on their own," he said.

However, Kim expressed a fear shared by numerous South Koreans that the end of the U.N. Korea debate on November 22-- and the delicate diplomatic maneuvering for votes and headlines that accompanied the debate--will mean the beginning of harsher repression of anti-government forces by the Pak clique.

"Based on past performance, the government will crack down harder," said Kim when asked about the government's relative leniency toward student demonstrators since October 2 (limited arrests and no reports of serious torture as in the past). "My hope, however, is that in the face of world opinion, the government will become more flexible."

Kim said that the "unofficial word" is that he will be allowed to leave the country soon, meaning that he doesn't expect the feared government crack-down to affect his passport application. However, other observers in Seoul say that if Kim's application, tied up in bureaucratic channels since November 5, isn't approved by the time of the mid-December Japan-ROK economic meeting, then Kim may be in for a long winter's hibernation in Seoul.

Is Kim's life safe in Seoul? He said he has received a number of threatening phone calls but no direct threats at his house, which is guarded by two huge dogs at the gate and a dozen supporters at the door.

"Visitors in the past two weeks have been more concerned about my safety if and when I should return to Japan," said Kim. "I'd like to spend three or four days there if only to thank the Japanese media for their support since August."

When asked about the future of the Pak regime, Kim said: "The oppression of the past year will not continue one more year. It cannot. Conditions will force Pak either into more severe oppression or into easing the regimentation, censorship and control. To protect his own future, he may choose the first course. To protect the future of our country, he must choose the second course," said Kim.

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IWAKUNI SERVICEMEN'S CENTER: MINISTRY TO U.S. MARINES

"Eight years ago I considered the Marines here only as parts of the military system for killing the Vietnamese. But as I got to know American soldiers through the Servicemen's Center, I began to look at the young Americans at the base as persons as human beings who had problems which needed a ministry. The servicemen opened up their troubled consciences to me concerning their participation in the war. They have opened up their feelings concerning war and peace, love and marriage, the contradictions in the military system, and their dreams for the future." -Japanese pastor in Iwakuni

Fifty meters outside the main gate of the Iwakuni Marine base is a two-storey building that's rather out of place. It's out of place because it's relatively quieter than the row of bars and restaurants that surround it. It's out of place because of its reading room, coffee bar, card tables, ping-pong, Japanese-style room and counselling room. But most of all it's out of place because most U.S. Marines don't necessarily expect to act like full human beings, or to be treated as such, on or off the base--but inside this building they can.

Until recently the main focus of Iwakuni Servicemen's Center has been on rest and recreation. Now, the program also includes issue-centered study and discussion, personal counseling, Japanese culture, language and friends for 30 to 40 Marines each day. In cooperation with the Ministry to Service Personnel in East Asia (MSPEA) committee of the NCCUSA, the NCC of Japan has supported the center programs during the past 12 years.

Today, with the Vietnam War supposedly over and the U.S. supposedly assuming a lower military posture in East Asia, a number of servicemen's centers are being phased out for a variety of reasons. However, because of the U.S. commitment to South Korea, the contingent of 4,500 Marines at Iwakuni isn't being cut back--

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* * * * * and the Marines who use the Servicemen's Center hope that the facilities and program at the center won't be cut back either.

One of the immediate problems of the center is its facilities. The building is considered ideal in every way, but the ten-year rental arrangement is now in its 12th year and the owner wants to sell the property. Because the owner is a supporter of the center, he is first offering the building to the churches at a very reasonable price which will expire by February.

The question is where the money might come from. The church in Japan doesn't feel that it can bear the whole responsibility for this ministry. Dr. In Ha Lee, a member of the NCC Management Committee for Iwakuni Servicemen's Center, said after visiting the center in mid-November: "I believe this ministry is properly the responsibility of the American churches toward their own sons." However, there is fear that the financial crunch in U.S. churches will affect the center, even though these churches must know the invaluable witness and sharing that takes place in the center.

Dr. Lee was impressed with the inter-racial mix among the Marines using the center, a mix which runs counter to the sometimes intense racial divisions on the base itself. Today both Black and Hispanic Americans are participating in the center's programs.

While the regular director, Mrs. Margery McWilliams, is on furlough, the current directors are Mark and Mary Fraser, a young missionary couple of the United Presbyterian Church. The Frasers' ministry has been highly evaluated by the Marines, especially as they have enlivened the center with issue-centered discussion groups. One Marine said, however, that he had a personal preference for "older people" in terms of counseling.

The center is also the base for G.I. counseling by a lawyer supported by the National Lawyer's Guild in the U.S. The legal program, similar to the program at the Yokosuka Naval Base south of Tokyo, continues to be highly used by Marines who aren't sure about their legal rights in the U.S. military, or who know their rights but are afraid to confront the "brass".

The NCC Japan is working hard to find a way both to keep the present facility and continue the vital program. It is confident and hopeful that church bodies in the U.S. will lend their support to keep the center going at full strength.

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BOOK REVIEW: ONDO NO TAMI

Angry and Hate Filled People by Ryuzo Kamino, Kyobun-Kan 1973

"The local churches do not know about the first priority of community, nor show any interest in the problems around us," said John Nakajima, NCC General Secretary at the ninth NCC Urban Industrial mission conference.

Likewise the author of this book, who has been one of the organizers and leaders of Kanemi rice oil victims, and who himself is a victim of the poisoning, agonizes over the cold and unconcerned attitude of the church. The poison PCB, carelessly introduced into cooking oil, first attacks the internal organs; then, as written in the Book of Job, "loathsome sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head" break out all over the body. The writer's whole family was attacked. The suffering was great.

Mr. Kamino states in the book that the attitude of the church was like that of the comforters in the Book of Job. Besides his great pain and suffering, his friends left him and kept him in a prison of discrimination. Again and again Kamino's cry was the same as Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The disease, thought to be communicable, was caused by poison in the rice oil produced by the Kanemi Company, but it took one year to discover this fact.

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The book records in diary form the painful and difficult process the author went through in asking for help from the company, community leaders, the Government and radical political groups. In spite of a high fever from the pain of destroyed internal organs, the author was a light to other victims who floundered in the dark. He says that his appeal to the power structure for help left no hope of salvation. Rather, he found himself repelled by his own society, and in the process was inflicted with a greater sense of outcast inferiority.

Working with structured movements, such as radical political groups or mass people's organizations, he found these people led only by abstract ideologies. In the movement, individuals lost their individual personalities and were gradually reduced to mutually-exclusive sects fighting among themselves.

Jesus told his disciples before he entered the Garden: "My soul is very sorrowful even to death, remain here and watch with me." But while Jesus was in pain, the disciples slept. People today seem to be asleep most of the time, and as such they easily become accustomed to their existing situation, without perception and understanding of the pain and sorrow of others.

The anti-pollution struggle is not a class struggle between the "haves" and the "have nots", but rather a struggle to recover humanness out of human destruction. The struggle is not simply to attack industries which set themselves up as little gods; nor is the struggle simply the winning of court battles in order to receive compensation. The struggle must be directed at clarifying human rights and dignity, which are not commodities to be paid for by any amount of compensation money. The struggle is the desire to obtain life returned unto itself.

This book is a testimonial of the struggle and agony of a Christian who is a victim of a perverse industrial society. The epilogue is the author's evaluation of the Minamata, Yokkaichi, and Kanemi anti-pollution movements. Although it is hard reading, the book is a powerful plea for a reevaluation of the present situation in today's society.

--reviewed by Aiko Carter

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MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

ISHIWARA RECEIVES GOVERNMENT'S HIGHEST AWARD--Dr. Ken Ishiwara was one of the five senior scholars awarded the Order of Culture at ceremonies held at the Imperial Palace on Culture Day, Nov. 3. A historian of Christianity, Dr. Ishiwara played a leading role in the movement begun in the fall of 1945 to found International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo. He served ICU afterward as Councillor, Guest Professor, and member of the Committee on Asian Cultural Studies (predecessor of the Institute of Asian Cultural Studies). Although retired from active posts, he is, at 91, still engaged in research and writing. The Order of Culture is the highest award given by the Japanese government to citizens.

APPEAL MADE FOR STUDENTS ARRESTED IN SOUTH KOREA--The Asia office of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) has issued an urgent appeal for funds, and for letter and cables of support, for some 200 students who have been arrested so far in South Korea. The students have been arrested for demonstrating against the Chung Hee Park dictatorship and against the heavy dragnet that the Korean CIA has laid over each and every campus since martial law was declared 13 months ago. The demonstrations, which began Oct. 2 in Seoul and have been building steadily since then, have demanded a restoration of democracy, free speech and free press.

Donations toward a defense fund for the students, about half of whom are Christian, may be channeled through the WSCF Office, 551 Totsuka machi 1-chome, Shinjuku ku, Tokyo 160. Letters and cables of concern and support should be sent to: Joint Christian Student Committee, c/o National Student YWCA, 1-3 First Street, Myungdong, Seoul, Korea. The joint committee is composed of the Korean Student Christian Federation, the Student YWCA and Pax Romana.

JCAN Nov. 30 * HEADLINE-MAKING EVENTS compiled by Aiko Carter
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* * * * * * * * * (Top news in the Asahi Newspaper from Nov. 1 to 24)

KIM DAE JUNG CASE 'SETTLED': The international dispute between Japan and South Korea over the kidnapping from Japan of Korea's opposition political leader Kim Dae Jung by the Korean CIA, was "settled" by the two governments on November 2. As a result, business and economic aid talks, designed largely to boost Japanese business interests, will be resumed after a 3-month delay. The questions of the violation of Japan's sovereignty and of basic human rights have been swept under the rug in order that Japan's monied class can get on with business as usual.

JAPAN REELING FROM 'OIL SHOCK': Household consumers and industrial users have been asked to cut consumption by 10%. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry has been feuding with the Defense Agency over the latters' cut in oil consumption. The NDF which consumes 0.3% of Japan's total oil stocks, doesn't want to cut consumption at all. Meanwhile amateur astronomers are elated over the oil embargo because Tokyo's skies are now almost dark enough to see the stars as more advertising signs are turned off. Japan's traditional neutral stance in the Arab-Israel dispute on November 22 suddenly shifted to a pro-Arab position because of the Arab oil embargo.

RICE AND WHEAT PRICE HIKE: A 13.8% rice and 35% wheat price hike had been proposed, but long negotiations between consumer's unions and the government resulted in a 9.8% rice price hike effective next April and a 35% wheat price hike effective this December.

CONVERTING FARM LAND TO INDUSTRIAL USE: The Prime Minister plans to introduce a bill to the national Diet that would divert 300,000 hectares (5 per cent of Japan's farm land) to primarily industrial uses and perhaps housing during the next year. The proposal has LDP backing despite the world wide food shortage and the energy crisis.

TOILET PAPER PANIC: Starting from Osaka and sweeping across the country by mid-November was a rumor about a shortage of toilet paper. Within three days not only toilet paper but also sugar, salt and detergents disappeared from market shelves. When the items could be found, customers rushed to buy them at almost double the normal price. The police were called in to guard the toilet paper shelves and calm down shoppers in some stores. Government announcements assuring full production and supply of the items didn't help much and prices continue moving upward.

POLLUTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH CRIMES: A change in the criminal code has been proposed that would include public health-related crimes in the code. This would mean that pollution threatening public health would be treated as a criminal rather than a civil case. Objections have been made that the courts will be unable to prosecute corporations the same as individuals. Furthermore since air and water pollution comes from a variety of sources, observers say it would be very difficult to prosecute a single enterprise as a criminal.